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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0984
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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN LAUNCHES NEW PROGRAM TO REVERSE BRAIN DRAIN

11. (SBU) Summary: On July 15, President Zardari launched the President's Program for Care of Highly Qualified Overseas Pakistanis (PPQP). This program plans to integrate the skills and talents of expatriate Pakistanis back into Pakistan in an attempt to "reverse the brain drain." The government will pay airfare and stipends for overseas Pakistanis to come work on either a short-term or long-term basis while employers will pay for lodging expenses. In one week, the PPQP website has received over 130,000 hits with 893 highly qualified Pakistanis registered and 33 employers listed. If the PPQP is successful, it could become a huge drain on the GOP budget. End Summary.

12. (SBU) On July 18, EconOff discussed the PPQP with Secretary of Labor Malik Asif Hayat, Joint Secretary of Labor Shah Rukh Nusrat, and Representative from the President's Secretariat Hashaam Riaz Sheikh. They explained that the GOP is looking to harness the human capital of overseas Pakistanis to help rebuild the Pakistani economy. The PPQP will be managed by the Ministry of Labor and Manpower with guidance from the President's Secretariat.

13. (SBU) The Ministry of Labor and Manpower will divide potential employees into two categories: those willing to stay and work in Pakistan for over 10 months (long term), and those willing to work from anywhere from two weeks to 9 months (short term). The GOP plans to provide airfare and a weekly stipend for the expatriate employees until they receive their first paycheck. The stipends run from Rs. 50,000 (USD 610) to Rs. 75,000 (USD 915) a week and could last several months depending on the individual arrangement. The employer is expected to arrange and pay for lodging for the employee.

14. (SBU) The PPQP will accept skilled Pakistanis from all fields and professions but is particularly focusing on finance, education, health, and engineering. Candidates must have at least 16 years of education (i.e. the equivalent of an undergraduate degree in the United States). The Ministry of Labor will match prospective employees with employers on a weekly basis. It will also email out a weekly newsletter with information on new jobs and different sectors in Pakistan to all those registered in the database.

15. (SBU) The PPQP's primary recruitment tool is its new website which allows prospective overseas Pakistanis to input their areas of expertise and other qualifications. One week into the program, it has already received over 130,000 hits with 893 highly qualified

Pakistanis registered and 33 employers recorded. The registration form is quite detailed and asks for previous employment history and educational background as well as personal information such as passport number, date of birth, address, and religion.

¶16. (SBU) Secretary Hayat anticipates that the federal government will be the biggest user of the PPQP as he feels it is in dire need of highly-skilled, technical experts. Secretary Hayat said he would like to use this website and framework for future recruiting for all GOP positions and expand the program to Pakistani residents as well. He expects the PPQP to grow rapidly.

¶17. (SBU) Hayat asked for U.S. support in the form of technical assistance, such as improving the website to make it more advanced. He cited U.S. companies such as Monster.com and CareerBuilder.com as models for a larger, more complex GOP job recruiting website.

¶18. (SBU) Comment: The GOP officials were very excited about this program. Sheikh told EconOff that he receives calls on a daily basis from Pakistani-Americans working on Wall Street and elsewhere who are looking for ways to contribute to Pakistan in a more meaningful manner than just donating money and sees the PPQP as the answer. The GOP has not allocated funds for the PPQP in the 2009-2010 budget. However, the Ministry of Labor has asked for money for the PPQP to come out of the Public Sector Development Program, which was allocated almost USD 7.9 billion this fiscal year. If this program is indeed successful and if the federal government is the main employer, then, of course, the GOP will be paying for the airfare, stipend, lodging, and salaries of hundreds, possibly thousands of overseas Pakistanis. Depending on the level

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of expertise acquired, that may or may not be a good deal for Pakistan's overburdened exchequer. End Comment.

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